

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
AID-05 EB-07 CIEP-01 TRSE-00 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3967
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0012

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SOPN, PROP, GY
SUBJECT: GUYANESE REVIEW 1976 AND PROSPECTS FOR 1977, PM
ANNOUNCES ELECTIONS FOR 1978

1. IN TRADITIONAL NEW YEAR'S EVE MESSAGE, PM EXHORTED
GUYANESE TO PAY GREATER ATTENTION TO DUTY AND MAKE
EXTRA EFFORTS TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY DURING 1977.
BURNHAM CLAIMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN RECORD PUBLIC
INVESTMENT OF G\$360 DURING 1976, BUT ADMITTED THAT
BAD WEATHER, FALLING SUGAR PRICES AND INFLATIONARY
PRESSURES HAD PRODUCED ECONOMIC CRISIS.

2. DURING EXCHANGES AT CONCLUSION OF PARLIAMENT, PM
ANNOUNCED THAT NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD
IN 1978.

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3. EDITORIALS STRESSED THAT DESPITE CRISIS, SITUATION
IS NOT AS BAD AS MANY HAD FEARED IT WOULD BE.
THE BUDGET DID NOT REMOVE MOST SUBSIDIES ON
FOODSTUFFS. COMMENTATORS CONCLUDED THAT IF
PRICES FOR EXPORT COMMODITIES INCREASE SLIGHTLY,
IF WEATHER HOLDS, IF THERE IS INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY
AND IF INDUSTRIAL PEACE PREVAILS, THEN GUYANA

CAN PULL OUT OF PRESENT RECESSION. GUYANA WAS
PORTRAYED AS BEACON OF HOPE FOR CARIBBEAN
WHICH IS CLOSELY WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS HERE.

4. OTHER NEWS ARTICLES PROVIDED MORE DETAILED
ANALYSIS OF PAST YEAR. MOST WRITERS
EMPHASIZED (A) NATIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN
COMPANIES, ESPECIALLY BOOKERS; (B) TAKEOVER
OF ALL PRIVATE SCHOOLS; (C) DECISION BY THE
PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP) TO TAKE SEATS
IN PARLIAMENT; AND (D) KIMBIA MANIFESTO AND
GUYANA'S ROLE IN NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. ALL
ACCOUNTS EMPHASIZED THAT DESTABILIZATION BY
AN UNSPECIFIED ENEMY (READ U.S.) IS PARTLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS.
"CHRONICLE" CARRIED FLASHBACK ON CUBANA
AIRLINER DISASTER WHICH STATED THAT ELEVEN
GUYANESE WERE VICTIMS OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM.

5. A PARTICULARLY INTERESTING STORY BY NATIONAL
NEWS SERVICE (PAUL PERSAUD) REVIEWED PRESENT POOR
STATE OF GUYANA-U.S. RELATIONS. WRITER
(PRESUMABLY PERSAUD) STRESSED THAT GUYANA IS
STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT COUNTRY WHICH COULD
PLAY VITAL ROLE IN LINKING CARIBBEAN, AFRICA,
AND SOUTH AMERICA. THIS SUPPOSEDLY ACCOUNTS FOR
INTEREST IN GUYANA SHOWN BY BOTH U.S. AND USSR.
THE NEAR-CRISIS IN U.S.-GUYANA RELATIONS WAS
ATTRIBUTED TO AMERICAN UNHAPPINESS OVER GUYANA'S
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GROWING TIES WITH CUBA. THE AUTHOR OF THIS
REVIEW, WHO HAS READY ACCESS TO PM BURNHAM,
POINTED OUT THAT THE QUESTION OF GUYANA-U.S.
RELATIONS WOULD BE CONSIDERED AT THE UPCOMING HEADS
OF MISSION CONFERENCE AND THAT MAJOR CONSIDERATION

WILL BE GIVEN TO DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS WITH
NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION.

6. COMMENT: THE ONLY SURPRISING FEATURE OF
PREDICTABLE END OF YEAR RHETORIC WAS THE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTIONS TO BE HELD IN 1978.
THE TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS SURPRISING,
ALTHOUGH ACCORDING TO CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA
ELECTIONS ARE DUE IN 1978. THE GOVERNMENT IS
PRESENTLY DRAFTING NEW CONSTITUTION TO BE
PRESENTED IN MID-1977 FOR RATIFICATION, AND
BURNHAM MAY HAVE WANTED TO REASSURE GUYANESE THAT
FREE ELECTORAL PROCESS WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED. THE

POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH NEW
U.S. ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN DISCUSSED IN MEDIA,
BUT NOT PROMINENTLY FEATURED.
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